centre which it was in the middle of the eighteenth century, when its importance almost exceeded that of New York.

The diamond industry was another in which the Jews played a not inconsiderable role throughout the ages. Here, the reason is plain. In the Middle Ages, dealing in precious stones was one of the few callings, other than money-lending, in which they were allowed to engage; and they found an added attraction in it by reason of their general insecurity, which made them desirous of having their property in an easily transferable form. Their international connexions, and their pawn-broking business, gave an additional impulse. From dealing in precious stones, they naturally became interested in working them. In the seventeenth century, they were regarded as the best gem-polishers in Venice, though the protectionist policy of the *Serenissima* subsequently excluded them (to the great loss of the city, as was subsequently realised). Possibly, it was by the refugees from Venice that the craft was established in Holland, where its introduction is associated with the Portuguese Jews. The latter were engaged in it in Amsterdam as early as 1612. From that date onwards, this has been one of the mainstays of the Jewish community of that city, still the greatest centre of business, where the proportion of Jewish workers employed has never been less than 70 per cent. When in 1748 their Gentile com-petitors petitioned for legislation to exclude

the Jews from the industry, the Government refused to take action, on the grounds that "the Jews have established the diamond trade in this city".

A natural outcome of this interest was that Jews, proficient in gem-cutting, became expert seal-engravers. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, they worked in this capacity in many Central European courts, some